

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5721

As of January 24, 2022

Title: An act relating to consolidating natural resource management under the commissioner of public lands.

Brief Description: Consolidating natural resource management under the commissioner of public lands.

Sponsors: Senators Van De Wege and Salomon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/25/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Commissioner of Public Lands to appoint the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Director of the State Parks and Recreation Commission.
- Authorizes the Commission of Public Lands to appoint the members of the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the State Parks and Recreation Commission.
- Transfers the powers and duties for the Fish and Wildlife Commission to the Director and the Department of Fish and Wildlife and makes the Fish and Wildlife Commission advisory.
- Transfers the powers and duties for the State Parks and Recreation Commission to the Director and the State Parks and Recreation Department and makes the State Parks and Recreation Commission advisory.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

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Background: Commissioner of Public Lands. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages 5.6 million acres of state-owned land, of which 3 million acres is state trust land that provides revenue to help pay for construction of public schools, universities, and other state institutions, and funds services in many counties. The Commissioner of Public Lands (Commissioner) is a separately elected statewide official and the administrator for DNR. The Commissioner chairs the state's Board of Natural Resources, which sets policy for the management of state lands and also the Forest Practices Board, which regulates forest operations.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), the director of DFW, and the Fish and Wildlife Commission are authorized to regulate state fish and wildlife resources and to issue licenses for fishing and hunting activities. DFW also manages nearly one million acres of public land for fish and wildlife, habitat conservation, and wildlife-oriented recreation.

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. The Fish and Wildlife Commission consists of nine members serving six-year terms. Members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Persons eligible for appointment as members of the Fish and Wildlife Commission must have general knowledge of the habits and distribution of fish and wildlife and must not hold another state, county, or municipal elective or appointive office. In making appointments to the Fish and Wildlife Commission, the Governor must seek to maintain a balance reflecting all aspects of fish and wildlife, including representation recommended by sport fishers, commercial fishers, hunters, private landowners, and environmentalists.

The Legislature has provided the Fish and Wildlife Commission with broad policy and rulemaking authority for DFW. Among other duties, the Fish and Wildlife Commission also classifies wildlife and establishes the basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used for fishing and hunting. Members of the Fish and Wildlife Commission are eligible to receive compensation for serving on the commission. The Fish and Wildlife Commission has the authority to appoint the director of DFW.

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission operates the state park systems, which includes 120 developed parks, recreation programs, trails, boating safety, and winter recreation. State Parks is governed by a board of seven volunteer citizens appointed by the Governor. The Legislature has provided the State Parks and Recreation Commission with broad policy and rulemaking authority. The State Parks and Recreation Commission is responsible for the care, charge, control, and supervision of all parks and parkways and also appoints the agency's director. Members of the State Parks and Recreation Commission are eligible to receive compensation for serving on the commission.

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) is an interstate compact agency that helps resource agencies and the fishing industry sustainably manage Pacific Ocean resources in a five-state region. The Governor must appoint two persons representing the fishing industry as representatives of Washington State on the PSMFC.

Summary of Bill: The Commissioner of Public Lands is authorized to appoint the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Director of the State Parks and Recreation Commission. The Commissioner must appoint the members of the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the State Parks and Recreation Commission.

The powers and duties of the Fish and Wildlife Commission are transferred to the Director and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Fish and Wildlife Commission is renamed the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission and commission members no longer receive compensation for serving on the commission. The duties of the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Commission include advising the Director:

- regarding fish and wildlife policies and proposed rules that govern hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, habitat protection and restoration, and the use of department-owned and managed lands;
- on department agreements relating to fish and wildlife harvest with tribal, interstate, international, and other parties;
- prior to the director determining the status of threatened or endangered species; and
- in developing long-term funding strategies to carry out the department's mission and delivery of programs to the public.

The powers and duties for the State Parks and Recreation Commission are transferred to the Director and the State Parks and Recreation Department. The State Parks and Recreation Commission is renamed the State Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission and members no longer receive compensation for serving on the commission. The duties of the State Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission include:

- making recommendations to the State Parks Director for the proper use, care, and administration of state parks and parkways;
- providing a public forum to review and make recommendations on issues regarding state parks; and
- making recommendations regarding the performance of the State Parks and Recreation Department in implementing park policies.

The Commissioner of Public lands must appoint two persons representing the fishing industry as representatives of Washington on the Pacific Marine Fisheries Commission.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2022.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.